

VZCZCXRO7265

OO RUEHAO RUEHCD RUEHGA RUEHGD RUEHHA RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHMT RUEHNG  
RUEHNL RUEHQU RUEHRD RUEHRG RUEHRS RUEHTM RUEHVC  
DE RUEHUB #0140/01 0612133  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 022133Z MAR 09  
FM USINT HAVANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4185  
INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/COGARD INTELCOORDCEN WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 0019

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000140

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [ECON](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: GOC ANNOUNCES MAJOR LEADERSHIP SHAKEUP

Classified By: COM Jonathan Farrar for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Cuban government announced 12 major leadership changes at noon today (3/2) including the dismissal of Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and the removal of Vice President Carlos Lage as head of the Cabinet. The sweeping changes follow close on the heels of the naming of three new Vice Presidents (Ramiro Valdes Menendez, Ulises Rosales del Toro, and Jorge Luis Serra), and would seem to give Raul Castro a considerably stronger hand. Consistent with Raul's calls for greater efficiency, the changes will also consolidate functions formerly managed by several small ministries and put them under leaders who are more to his liking. The changes also add further military participation to the government. Finally, some key Fidelistas are out, making this very much Raul's government. End Summary.

12. (U) Cuban media announced a major 12-point shakeup in the Council of State, Cabinet, and Communist Party leadership during its noon broadcasts. The changes are as follows:

(1) Vice President and Minister of Planning and Economy, Jose Luis Rodriguez, was fired from both positions

(2) Vice President Otto Rivero Torres was fired and newly appointed Vice President Ramiro Valdes will take over his duties.

(3) The Ministries of Foreign Commerce and Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation are merged to become the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment. The new minister will be Rodrigo Malmierca, who most recently had been Cuba's representative to the United Nations. Foreign Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez Ramirez was fired.

(4) The Ministries of Food Industry and Fishing Industry are merged to form the new Ministry of Food Industry, which will include the fishing industry, under the leadership of Maria del Carmen Concepcion Gonzalez, who earlier had been removed from the Secretariat of the Communist Party Central Committee.

(5) Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque is fired and replaced by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla.

(6) Minister of Finance and Pricing Georgina Barreiro Fajardo is fired and replaced by Lina Pedraza Rodriguez. Barreiro also was removed from her position as a member of the Secretariat of the Communist Party Central Committee, from which she oversaw economic issues.

(7) Minister of Metallurgic Industries Fernando Acosta Santana is fired and replaced by Brigadier General Salvador Pardo Cruz, who had been the Director General of the Military

Industrial Union.

(8) Vice Minister of Domestic Commerce Jacinto Angulo Pardo is promoted to Minister.

(9) Minister of Labor and Social Security Alfredo Morales Cartaya is fired and replaced by Vice Minister Margarita Marlene Gonzalez Fernandez.

(10) Secretary of the Council of State Jose M. Miyar Barruecos is designated as the new Minister of Science, Technology and Environment.

(11) Subject to ratification by the National Assembly, Deputy Homero Acosta Alvarez is designated Secretary of the Council of State to replace Jose Miyar noted in (10) above.

(12) Vice President Carlos Lage Davila is removed from his position as the Secretary of the Council of Ministers (Chef de Cabinet) and replaced by Brigadier General Jose Amado Ricardo Guerra, the current chief of the Secretariat of the Ministry of Defense.

The Council of State announcement concludes with the following statement: "In the framework of these decisions, the Political Bureau and the Council of State ratified the comments made by Comrade Raul Castro on February 24, 2008 when he said that: '...institutionality is one of the pillars of the invulnerability of the Revolution in the political field, which we ought to strive constantly to perfect. We have never believed that anything we have done is perfect.' Taking that statement into consideration, it was agreed that

HAVANA 00000140 002 OF 002

it will remain necessary to continue studying the current structure of the government with the goal of reducing its breadth and increasing its efficiency."

13. (C) COMMENT: The extensive changes announced today consolidate and make clear that Raul is firmly in control. The announcement of the addition of three Vice Presidents last week, all of them known to be loyal to Raul, and the earlier replacement of the Minister of Agriculture with a General (Ulises Rosales del Toro, who is also one of the just named Vice Presidents and had headed the Sugar Ministry), had been seen as incremental steps that helped strengthen Raul's hold on the Council of State and the management of a key ministry. But today's moves expose his motives much more clearly. Perhaps most notably, the firing of Foreign Minister Perez Roque removes the most high profile Fidelista from the government. Carlos Lage has gone from being mentioned as a possible successor to Fidel before the February 2008 National Assembly vote to seeing his star flicker out almost completely. As noted in the final comment in the announcement, there may be more changes in the works, but this announcement is, as one of our local employees described it, virtually a coup d'etat Cuban style. The new Council of State and Cabinet are much streamlined (though there are still a lot of extraneous ministries) and revolutionary and military figures trusted by Raul are in key positions of authority. This group's principal attribute is loyalty to Raul, not original thinking. It is too early to say if Cuban foreign policy will change under the new structure. New Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez is a gray figure who is not likely to take the initiative on foreign policy. Rather, Vice President Ricardo Cabrisas, known to be very close to Raul, may well end up with effective control of all of the foreign affairs related ministries and their policies.

FARRAR